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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-fifth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(Item *3 (b)*)

Reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and on the review of the evaluation capacity of the Office of the High Commissioner

1. At its 9th meeting, on 5 June 2015, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (E/AC.51/2015/5). The Committee also considered the OIOS report on the review of the evaluation capacity of UNHCR (E/AC.51/2013/5), which had been deferred at the fifty-third session of the Committee.

2. The Director of the Inspection and Evaluation Division of OIOS introduced the reports and responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of the reports. Representatives of UNHCR also responded to questions raised during the meeting.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed appreciation and high regard for the important work of UNHCR. Delegations noted the increasingly complex environment in which UNHCR worked, the rising number of displaced people and the prevalence of external challenges, including ongoing conflict and the lack of political will and funding. The view was expressed that those factors were not adequately reflected in

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the OIOS report and that it lacked a balance between what UNHCR was realistically able to influence and what it could not. In that regard, delegations stressed that collaboration with the international community was a key aspect of the work of UNHCR on solutions. It was also emphasized that tackling the human rights, humanitarian, developmental and reconstruction challenges of displacement required strong political will and a supportive environment and that solutions should be sought collaboratively, with the coordinated and timely engagement of all relevant actors.

4. Delegations expressed appreciation for the OIOS report. Some delegations emphasized that recommendations that implied the restructuring of UNHCR, such as recommendations 1 and 5, would require intergovernmental approval prior to their implementation. Clarification was sought as to how UNHCR would implement the recommendations, and delegations noted the need for UNHCR to adapt the implementation of the recommendations to the local context. One delegation suggested an additional recommendation on the need to strengthen international legislation regarding displaced people.

5. Delegations sought clarification on the questions of effectiveness raised by OIOS in its report. Delegations expressed concern about results achieved in emergency assistance, noting that, in certain countries and situations, up to half of internally displaced persons had not been reached. Reference was made to deficiencies in repatriation and resettlement results, and additional information was sought on the work of UNHCR with regard to profiling, registering and targeting persons of concern. In that regard, identifying and counting displaced persons was highlighted as an accountability issue, and the need for a proper follow-up framework was highlighted. Information was also sought on reintegration and whether post-repatriation or post-integration questions had been considered during analysis.

6. Delegations highlighted the primacy of the emergency response work of UNHCR and stressed that the nature and mandate of UNHCR was not political but humanitarian. At the same time, delegations noted the need to partner with development actors, including local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations country teams. In that regard, delegations noted with appreciation the recommendation to strengthen those partnerships, as well as ongoing work in that regard, such as the formation of the Solutions Alliance. Detail was sought on how the recommendation could be implemented and who the main partners were for the provision of financial resources and support to the work on the ground. Information was also sought on how to reconcile information provided in the report that indicated that most partners surveyed had noted that UNHCR had been largely effective in communicating with partners with the views of UNHCR staff who did not highly rate the work of the Office with its United Nations partners. Particular importance was given to partnering with local organizations, local government and persons of concern. It was also stressed that the primary responsibility lay with host authorities and that the international community must not replace the work of a host country but supplement it. One delegation raised the need for objective and transparent assessment criteria to be translated into indicators sensitive to the local context. Indicators should be developed in close cooperation with the authorities and humanitarian and development actors and after consultation with communities of internally displaced persons.

7. Several comments were made regarding the methodology used in the evaluation, including mission selection and consultations with host Governments, and apparent disparities in data regarding the effectiveness of partnerships and details of UNHCR agreements with host Governments. It was indicated that, given the complexity of the work and operating environment of UNHCR, a one-size-fits-all evaluation methodology would not work. Referring to information provided in the report that field visits to UNHCR offices and field sites had been undertaken in the course of the evaluation, clarification was sought as to why there had been no field visit to the United Republic of Tanzania, which had among the highest numbers of refugees and experience with unique cases, including in local integration. Furthermore, the view was expressed that field visits should have been made not only to UNHCR offices but also to local authorities and the host Government for consultation. Similarly, the view was expressed that OIOS should have conducted qualitative interviews with more diverse refugees and internally displaced persons.

8. Delegations raised the issues noted in the OIOS report on the evaluation capacity of UNHCR and requested updates on measures taken to strengthen the UNHCR evaluation function since the issuance of that report in 2013. Clarification was also sought as to whether cooperation between UNHCR and OIOS had improved since that report had been completed.

9. Clarification was sought on the creation of a staff development strategy, in particular on-the-job training, in order to ensure that training provided staff members with flexible tools designed to be adjusted to the local context.

10. One delegation stated that there was a need for escalated efforts aimed at finding durable solutions for internally displaced persons that were based on, reflected and were consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law, in particular in the recently emerged crisis areas. The framework should prioritize conditions for effective communication between internally displaced persons and UNHCR, as well as opportunities for the displaced to participate in the planning and management of durable solution strategies.

11. Delegations emphasized that future OIOS evaluation reports on the work of UNHCR should ensure the inclusion of information regarding the relationship between the early registration and effective registration systems and census of refugees and the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees and the implementation of the appropriate durable solution.

12. Delegations also emphasized that, in conducting its future evaluation on the work of UNHCR, OIOS should also, to the extent possible, cover information from key stakeholders, including host Governments.

Conclusions and recommendations

13. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 60 to 65 of the report of OIOS on the evaluation of UNHCR (E/AC.51/2015/5), subject to the provisions of the present report.**

14. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 59 to 69 of the report of OIOS on the review of the evaluation capacity of UNHCR (E/AC.51/2013/5).**

15. **The Committee encouraged UNHCR, as part of its work to conduct effective advocacy at the global and operational levels, to continue to disseminate lessons learned and best practices on solution initiatives to Governments and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.**

16. **Regarding recommendation 6, the Committee recommended that OIOS include in its future report on the work of UNHCR information on durable solution initiatives for those with special needs in complex emergency refugee situations under the mandate of the Office.**

17. **The Committee stressed the need to ensure that the implementation by UNHCR of recommendations 1 and 5 contained in the evaluation report would be undertaken with the appropriate discussion and approval of Member States. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request UNHCR to ensure that applicable intergovernmental procedures were respected in that regard.**

18. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to entrust OIOS with providing information, in the next evaluation report on the work of UNHCR, on the impact that the absence of census and registration of the refugee populations may have on the accuracy of the assessment of their humanitarian needs and their protection, taking into account that the work of UNHCR is aimed at providing refugees with voluntary return or repatriation, resettlement to a third country and/or local integration.**

19. **The Committee shared the concern expressed in the OIOS evaluation report about the level of successes that had been achieved in finding solutions for protracted refugee situations, which a large proportion of the refugee population worldwide shared. The Committee emphasized the need for UNHCR to utilize its maximum capacity to deal with such situations, in particular those with a large number of refugees. Moreover, the Committee noted with appreciation the contribution of the host countries in protracted refugee situations and recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to entrust OIOS with including in its future evaluation reports information on the activities of UNHCR to intensify its efforts to increase international burden sharing and to reduce pressure on host countries.**

20. **The Committee recognized that, as stated in the OIOS report, UNHCR had effectively responded to complex emergency situations, while noting the external political and financial challenges facing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in achieving durable solutions for persons of concern.**

21. **The Committee noted the efforts under way to advance durable solutions for persons of concern and recommended that the General Assembly urge the High Commissioner to further take necessary measures in that regard and to provide Member States with regular updates on progress.**

22. **The Committee recalled that the main objective of UNHCR was to ensure the international protection of refugees and others of concern to UNHCR and to seek permanent solutions to their problems in cooperation with States and other organizations, including through the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons within its mandates.**